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Ancient Greek Philosophy and Present-Day Phenomenology

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In memoriam Norio FUJISAWA

In philosophical thought, ancient Greek philosophy is regarded as a paradigm which represents classical ancient times. In its clarity, simplicity, fundamentality, objectivity, and materiality (Sache), it does, no doubt, surpass any of the various thought belonging to the other ancient cultural spheres such as India, China, and Mesopotamia. For us Japanese living in the Far-East, ancient Greek philosophy is taken as a universal model of philosophical thought, and is widely accepted and researched. It can be said, indeed, that ancient Greek philosophy is a paradigm not for classical ancient times exclusively but for philosophy in general.

Phenomenology was first given solid foundations by Edmund Husserl, who, as is well-known, got his fundamental concept of intentionality from his teacher, Franz Brentano, a well-known Aristotelian scholar. Brentano attempted to interpret Aristotelianism in the light of intentionality. Archbishop Groeber sent Brentano's dissertation *Von der mannigfachen Bedeutung des Seienden nach Aristoteles* to Martin Heidegger, who was trying to give phenomenology conceptual self-understanding and a framework. Thereafter Heidegger made frequent reference to Brentano's dissertation in his philosophical writings, and it was precisely because he expected Brentano's questions to be more decisively dealt with in Husserl's *Logische Untersuchungen* that he began to take an interest in Husserl. Although Husserl might not have read Plato in the original Greek texts, he had much respect and sympathy for Platonic philosophy all his life. Thus it is evident that the movement of phenomenological thought was destined to be firmly bound to Greek philosophy from the beginning.

Our question is what meaning and influence does Greek philosophy have on phenomenology in the nineteen-eighties, and what kind of philosophical results worth considering have sprung from various philosophical researches into Greek philosophy.

Norio FUJISAWA, the representative Japanese specialist in Greek philosophy, has published books with titles which deal with: *Greek Philosophy and the Present Day* (Iwanami-shoten, Tokyo: 1980) and *Forms and World* (Iwanami-shoten, 1980). The latter is a collection of specialized dissertations, which should reinforce the former. Apart from his translations of Parmenides, Empedocles, and Sextus Empiricus into Japanese, he has edited and translated all the works of Plato taken down by his disciples. He is known abroad as the author of "Ἐχειν, Μετέχειν, and Idioms of 'Paradeigmatism' in Plato's Theory of Forms" (*Phronesis*, XIX:1974). But no one in Japan has ever discussed the significance of his Platonic researches for

phenomenology. Therefore my task is to elucidate some phenomenological insights that his Platonic theories contain. For convenience I will refer to Fujisawa's *Greek Philosophy and the Present Day* as (a) and to *Forms and World* as (b). It is in (b) that the essence of his fundamental ideas is revealed. What matters most for our immediate purpose is Chapter I : "Words" and Chapter II : "Raison d'être of Metaphysics." The principal view of (a) is that ancient atomism together with Aristotelianism has established modern science. We can say in general that Fujisawa attempts to make Platonism confront Aristotelianism, while always conscious of the modern scientific view of the world.

In fact, Fujisawa thinks that Aristotelianism permeates not only contemporary interpretations of Plato but philosophical research in general. His task is to criticize and expose this implicit Aristotelianism. He interprets it as a theory of parallelism, Subject/Predicate = Substance/Attribute, and insists that Aristotelian logico-ontological conceptions infiltrated the Platonic philosophy in the Occidental philosophical tradition. ((b)p.97) He states as follows: It was Aristotle who described the expression from, "S is P" as "P is predicated of s" or "P belongs to s." The latter form of expression leads to declaring the fact that an Attribute exists by depending on Substance (Substratum). Aristotle thought this applicable in describing the world, too. ((b)p.43)

We could summarize Fujisawa's views as follows: The fundamental function of words consists of "hypostatization," and with this, discrimination. It is not until we hypostatize and materialize a thing that we can cope with it. Probably this is the origin of scientific thoughts. "A green leaf," for example, can be divided into "green" and "leaf" only on the verbal level, which tends to give us an illusion that this separation can also happen in the "real" world. To deprive "leaf" of "green" in reality means, however, the extinction of the leaf itself. In the perceptual dimension we can find no one-sided relations of dependence such as Subject/Predicate (Adjective) or Substance/Attribute; "green" depends on "leaf," just as "leaf" depends on "green." What we find here is the relation of inter-dependence, of inter-founding. Owing to the magical mechanism of the words, we are obliged to accept the distinction of Substance/Attribute. Since this introduces atomism and materialism, it forms a substantial motive for the various premises of possibility which modern science possesses. Originally, ancient Greek was a language which occasionally dispensed with Subject: that was especially the case with the personal pronoun. (In this way Japanese resembles ancient Greek.) Therefore, the form of predication (Subject/Predicate) which most of the modern European languages possess derives, according to Fujisawa, from the post-Aristotelian philosophy and tradition. "It was Aristotle who strongly emphasized Subject and who put the formula Subject/Predicate = Substance/Attribute at the center of thought for the understanding of the world." ((b)p.33)

Hence Fujisawa came to seek a Platonism released from Aristotelianism. His de-

Aristotelianization of Plato means exactly to interpret Plato independently without being influenced by Aristotelianism; what Bergson criticizes, *mouvement rétrograde du vrai*, naturally does not apply to Fujisawa's interpretation. In order to prove the authenticity of the so-called Aristotelian parallelism Subject/Predicate=Substance/Attribute, Fujisawa examines one of Plato's thoughts on Form, namely the theory of *methexis*. His interpretation of *methexis* is that an individual or a thing exists by having (*echon*) some quality because the individual at the same time participates in (*metechein*) the Form. The theory, however, unwillingly supports Aristotelianism in the sense that establishing the Individual leads to establishing the Subject. Therefore for Fujisawa the point to be resolved is the elimination of the Individual in order to establish no Subject. Fujisawa actually settles the problem by replacing the theory of *methexis* with that of *paradeigma*. And he attempts to prove against Owenn that the *Timaios* is a later work, one just before *Leges*, the last one. In the *Timaios* the theory of Space (*chora*) appears and both the Individual and *methexis* are effaced.

Thus the "Individual" being eliminated, the question of the relationship between Form and Quality has to be asked. The material substance of the Individual disappears and is re-grasped Here (*hic*) in the wholeness of Space. The Quality of Here which exists as a part of the whole of Space accepts and reflects Form. In his English dissertation mentioned above Fujisawa writes in this way: "In this part of Space the Form of Beauty is *imaged*." or "An Image of the Form of Beauty has now *come into* this part of Space." (emphasis mine) It may be interesting to note that in his Japanese dissertation he uses the word *Utsushidasu* (mirror) instead of "image" (v.) and the word *Arawareru* (appear) instead of "come into." This difference of phraseologies in the English and the Japanese versions indicates that Fujisawa is conservative as a Platonic interpreter in his English version, but is very near to phenomenology in his Japanese version. I think his deeper intention rather lies in the latter. Fujisawa takes as an example "water": it is not that there is a substantial "thing" called "water" here but that the form of water as its quality "appears" and "mirrors" in the Here which is a part of the whole of Space. In his view, Forms are the standard for judging reality, and are therefore its pre-empirical, almost transcendently ultimate reason. This view makes it even more apparent that Fujisawa is in the main thinking along the lines of phenomenology. The world as the horizontal wholeness or the world as the Horizon synthesizing different horizons means the totality of Space (*chora*), where everything is co-related without having either substantiality, individuality or reality. This parallels the phenomenology of the life-world. (Cf. Husserl, *Krisis*, *Husserliana*, VI. The Hague: 1955. pp.146, 165, 173, 267) It is exactly in this part of Space (*chora*) that something *appears*; Form (Φ) appears as "F" (Quality). Form (Φ) gives ground for the discrimination that F is F and that F is absolutely distinct from any other qualities such as G, H, and I.

We could, in fact, reinterpret Fujisawa's interpretation of Form in the light of

appearance-theory (*Erscheinungstheorie*) in contemporary phenomenology.

Next, let us turn toward Germany. Among contemporary German phenomenologists Klaus Held deals with the theme “ancient Greek philosophy and modern phenomenology” more in depth than any other scholar. In his first book, *Lebendige Gegenwart*, (The Hague: 1966), he elucidates Husserl’s thought on time, the most difficult but at the same time the most profound in the whole of Husserlian phenomenology. Held deals not only with Husserl’s published texts but with his unpublished manuscripts of the nineteen-thirties. He has made sharp and elaborate structural analyses of the “stopping and flowing present” (*strömende und stehende Gegenwart*).

In his second book, *Heraklit, Parmenides und der Anfang von Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, Berlin – New York 1980, he summons the pre-Socratic philosophers onto the stage of contemporary phenomenological discussion. This book has double obstacles to obtaining a wide range of readers not only in Japan but also in the United States and perhaps in Germany, because philologists of ancient languages on the one hand, and phenomenologists on the other, are rarely conversant with each other. Indeed, to understand this book fully, a reader must be simultaneously and to some extent versed in both of these difficult fields. My task in this short essay is to summarize the essence of Held’s book and to indicate some controversial points.

Held stands very close to Husserl in the sense that he tries to elucidate the relation between pre-philosophic life, science, and philosophy. He calls this attitude “Relation-Thinking” (*Verhältnis-Denken*). Only, what he aims at is a transcendental-historic phenomenology which includes the pre-transcendental dimension.

His basic approach is to consider the various relations between pre-philosophic life (Heraclitus) and metaphysics. The contents of his book fall into the following divisions: I. The Beginning of Philosophy and Science as an Object of Our Interest; II. Heraclitus: The Beginning Thought Differs from Pre-philosophic Life; III. Parmenides: Preparation for Metaphysics. In Chapter I Held reanalyzes the fundamental concepts of Life World phenomenology. Moreover, as an expert Husserlian scholar, he leads us to a reconstitution of such important concepts as “Passive Genesis,” “Perspective,” “Intentionality,” and “Horizon.” His phenomenological interest lies in elucidating the “between-ness” of fulfillment (*Vollzug*) and object (*Vorliegendes*) in the tensional field of intentionality. This “between-ness” constitutes the appearing modes of given-ness (*Gegebenheitsweise*), which open the pre-Cartesian dimension. Namely, Held finds it impossible to support the Cartesian substantial dualism of the “inside” and “outside” world; he thinks that *Gegebenheitsweise* arises exactly in between these two extremes. (*Op. cit.* pp. 71-73) In short, the core of Held’s thought is the thinking of the Life-World, which eventually leads to transcending it. For in the Life-World no thinking can rest. In this point Held differs much from Merleau-Ponty or Schütz; he situates himself as a direct descendant of Hegel and Husserl. We can in this short space discuss only the

following two points from our perspective.

i) His positive statement concerning Parmenides is that *to eón* means ontological “indifference.” Of course he bears Heidegger’s ontological “twofold-ness” in mind, but his statement transcends Heidegger’s. This ontological indifference is worth further examination, for this is the core of his appearance theory.

ii) His interpretation of *to eón* contains exactly the structural thought that results in reciprocally-contemporary wholeness.

In interpreting Parmenides, Held presents many new, and remarkably interesting opinions. Like Fujisawa who points out the phenomenon of the infiltration of Aristotelianism into Platonic interpretations, Held finds the same phenomenon in his Parmenidesian interpretations. Getting rid of Aristotelianism means being liberated from the assumption that we should regard *eón* not only as something material but as the subject of a proposition. Held’s characteristic interpretation of *eón* is seen in his coinage, “das Seiend” (the nominalization of the present participle of be). For the Greek participle is equipped with the verbal function (*Sein* = to be) as well as with the nominal function (*Seiendes* = Being). This *das Seiend* expresses the indifference of determination (*Bestimmtheit*) and the determined (*Bestimmtes*). The impossibility of distinguishing “determining” from “being determined” means precisely the ontological indifference. “Someone sleeping” (*Schlafendes*) does not determine someone as sleeping. Neither is non-determinative being determined as “sleeping” The truth is, the sleeping being *appears* by way of being in the situation of sleeping.

To define this ontological indifference in another way, a thing always appears here in this, or that determined way. Held states elsewhere that *phainómenon* means ontological indifference also because of this double meaning (verbal-nominal). *Seiendes* and *Sein* are put in an indiscriminate relation. In my personal opinion this indiscrimination is none other than a spurning of Aristotelianism, one which approximates Fujisawa’s interpretation of Plato, though Form as the standard for judgment does not come to the surface in Parmenidesian indifference.

According to Held, everything that we see in front of us lies in this ontological indifference, which result he skillfully uses for the renewal of interpreting the concept of “phenomenon” in his dissertation “*Husserls Rückgang auf das phainómenon*,” (*Phänomenologische Forschungen* Vol. X, 1980), for *phainómenon* is one and the same thing as *eón*. *Phainómenon* signifies that a thing’s appearing can not be discriminated from its being determined in a certain condition. One question to be solved here is—how to find somewhere the principle of distinction, since the world is not so simply determined as black and white.

Next, we can see Held’s approach to ontological questions in his interpretation of *eón*. The fundamental belief of those who maintain a naturalistic attitude, or are ignorant, and just mortal is called *doxa*. Parmenides’ intention is to transcend this *doxa*, and only by transcending it can *doxa* be thematized. *Doxa* undergoes changes of

growth, condition or states. As I already mentioned, we do not suppose a neutral “bearer,” or substratum (*hypokeimenon*) in the change of these states. From the view point of ontological indifference, we cannot, for instance, distinguish the state of being cold from something cold or that of being hot from something hot. It is possible to explain the world only by changes of “state-determination.” Namely, the presence of one state means the absence of the other state. And the presence or the absence of a state belongs to each individual. These two exclude each other (*op. cit.*, p.487), but at the same time they are “equally-ranked, reciprocally-complementary, and opposed states.” (*op. cit.*, p.558) Each of the states (*Zustände*) is one-sided, and as long as we take the naturalistic attitude, we are yoked to this exclusive one-sidedness. It is, however, only by *noos* (direct seeing) that we can find the complete wholeness of *eón*. The two opposites harmonize and complement each other in their common comprehensive system. So far as I understand it, this is what many structuralists commonly call “structure.” Parmenidesian *noos* is reduced to structural thought.

There are at least two major results among many others which Held has achieved in his voluminous book: I) his thorough discussion of the origin of philosophy establishing the historical lineage of phenomenology, which has been discussed at random since Heidegger, and II) his relation of his recent research on classical philology to phenomenological study.

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